

Palm Sunday, Holy Communion, and a Pandemic: A Litany

(Bishop A. J. Richardson, 115)

A Minister:

It is the precious gift of memory, and collective imagination, that permit us to hear the chorus of voices, now echoing across the centuries and the continents, proclaiming glad “hosannas” at the presence of Jesus as He triumphantly entered Jerusalem. Witnesses to His healing power; those who had been inspired by His teaching and blessed by His touch; those who had been delivered from a crippling affliction, some maddening malady, would join the great chorus with a swelling crescendo, “Hosanna!” There would be no need for “rocks to cry out” on their behalf. They would not hold their peace, nor withhold their praise.

People:

From where we are, separated by a public policy of “social distancing,” we still proclaim with grateful hearts, “Hosanna in the highest!” There will be no need for “rocks to cry out” on our behalf. We will not withhold our praise.

A Minister:

The parade route ended at the temple, the House of God. Children and youths would lend their voices to that glad chorus with their own “hosannas,” even as the authorities — annoyed by the sound of youthful praise — demanded their silence. Jesus rebuked the detractors, but affirmed the young people. Then the temple — sacred space — was empty. He purged it!

People:

From where we are (quarantined or self-isolated) joined in a semblance of community by the gift of “technology” we still proclaim with grateful hearts, “Hosanna in the highest!” There will be no need for “rocks to cry out” on our behalf. We will not withhold our praise.

The Prayer of Confession

Minister and People:

Eternal God, Judge of all humankind, we confess our need of You. We confess not only our many sins, but also our anxieties about the *present predicament*, a health crisis on a scale so large as to be called a *pandemic*. We have never had such *proximity to pestilence* of near biblical *proportions*. Have mercy upon us! Give us grace to remember that “perfect love casts out fear” while also remaining vigilant against the cause of our anxiety.

The Prayer of Consecration

The Elder:

Today, we virtually enter a virtually empty temple, with faint hosannas on our tongue; let not our devotion die. We hold these ancient symbols of bread and wine, Reminding us of the meal You shared with Your disciples — a meal through which they (and we) should Remember You. It was the night You were betrayed by a disciple. You took bread and wine and blessed them and made of them a Sacrament. We once again consecrate these tokens, not as Relics, but as Reminders of Your sacrifice of body and blood, broken and shed because of Your great Love at Calvary. Now, in a different space, made sacred by our present purpose, we partake of the bread and we sip from the cup. We feast on these emblems by faith, grateful that You are forever present with us — Immanuel — even in a pandemic: Healer, Deliverer, blessed Savior forever! Amen.

People: We will not hold back our praise! Hosanna! Hallelujah! Amen!

The Elder: Together, let us eat! Together, let us drink — with thanksgiving! Amen!